

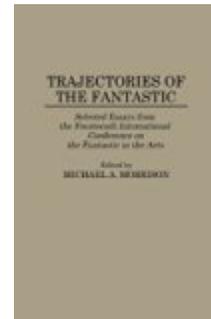
# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Michael A. Morrison, ed. *Trajectories of the Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Fourteen International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997. xx + 220 pp. \$59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-29646-8.

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*Trajectories of the Fantastic* is a colorful compilation of Fantastic analysis and criticism, an interpretative jigsaw puzzle of form and flavor. Michael Morrison proves through this collection of essays—selected from over 300 presented during the four-day Fourteenth Annual International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in March 1993—that Fantasy is indeed “adaptable to any aesthetic form” (xiii). Although Morrison refers to this text as an “imperfect mirror” (xiv), I believe that each fragmented vision, each essay, each puzzle piece—from television, film, photography, androgyny and architecture to opera, musicals, novels, and rock—skillfully fits into the next. The overall impression is simply one of Fantastic awe and appreciation.

The format includes an introduction by Morrison followed by six Fantastic essay clusters. This masterfully crafted jigsaw puzzle is best described through several of its most vibrant “pieces.”

First, Ursula Le Guin brilliantly defines the Fantastic as the one “fictional mode that doesn’t require an act of faith in anything beyond the story” (p. 12). Then Hathaway, in “No Paradise to be Lost,” molds a convincing argument that, in *Frankenstein*, Shelley perverts (in Morrison’s words) the “domestic ideals of motherhood and family” (p. xv) by shaking our faith in the mother figure (who is NOT female) as the redeemer and nurturer.

But, if the mother figure is not (necessarily) female, then what is “female”? Attebury in “Androgyny and Difference in Science Fiction” shapes an intriguing analysis of the basic (in)significance of sexual difference. Then, if man and female can comfortably cohabitate as one—body, one space—can myth and science? Andriano says,

“Yes,” asserting that an almost “imperceptible line” separates the two—much like, I would say, love and hate.

Indeed, another almost “imperceptible line” separates rescuer and victim, so argues Watson in “The Seductive Doom in Young-Adult Fantasy.” Similar to the paradox of the similarity in difference (as noted above), the enigma of “true happiness” is dissected and recreated by King in “Future Legends.” King believes that David Bowie’s music is reflective of SF images, styles, and ideas by being “fragmented and cohesive, condemned- yet blessed.”

But what about the horror films of the 1980’s? Any redeeming value there? How do they fit into the Fantastic puzzle? The answer to this question is “via technoculture.” In “Beauty in the Beast,” Charney, by focusing on the interplay between technology and desire through virtual reality, the internet, and cyborgs, proves the vital, often misunderstood, value of the horr(or)ible puzzle piece.

All of these Fantastic pieces do fit together—not neatly perhaps, but then the definition of the Fantastic is not neat. Perhaps this messy, somewhat distorted, “mirror” is what makes this genre so tantalizing, so seductive—for the Fantastic is better represented through what it is not than through what it is. Morrison’s well-crafted jigsaw puzzle of essays has artistically and deliberately dismantled the Fantastic, fashioning a Fantastic reconfiguration.

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